



Senate Bill 685

Program Open Space-Use of Property-Renewable Energy and Storage

Position: **UNF**

Date: **February 26, 2024**

To: **Education, Energy, and
the Environment**

The Caroline County Commissioners **OPPOSE** SB 685. This bill proposes to authorize the use of land acquired or developed with funds available under Program Open Space for the generation of electricity from solar or wind sources and the storage of electricity in energy storage devices.

Caroline County greatly values the Program Open Space initiative and its role in preserving and enhancing outdoor recreational opportunities, natural areas, and historic sites for the benefit of our residents and future generations. The program has been instrumental in supporting the development of parks, trails, and community projects that promote public health, environmental stewardship, and quality of life.

Allowing the use of Program Open Space lands for renewable energy generation and storage, particularly solar installations, presents significant challenges and conflicts with the primary objectives of the program. Caroline County has limited available land for recreational and conservation purposes, and the encroachment of solar facilities would jeopardize valuable open spaces and diminish the overall effectiveness of the Program Open Space initiative.

The Commissioners believe the preservation of Program Open Space lands is critical for maintaining biodiversity, protecting wildlife habitats, and mitigating the impacts of urbanization and development. Any alteration to the use of these lands should be approached with caution and careful consideration of the long-term consequences

The Commissioners respectfully urge an unfavorable report on SB 685. The Commissioners remain committed to supporting renewable energy goals through responsible siting practices and collaboration with stakeholders to identify suitable locations for solar and wind projects that minimize adverse impacts on our natural resources and communities.

Sincerely,

J. Travis Breeding, President